

**General Education Subcommittee Annual Report to the UCC 2004**  
**ENHANCING THE ALL UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM AT HSU:**  
**PART I: WRITING IN GE AND ACROSS THE CURRICULUM**

In Fall 2003 and Spring 2004 the GE Subcommittee worked toward implementation of the Summer 2003 Taskforce Proposal for GE at HSU. Improving student writing was a central element of the proposal and is a need frequently expressed by HSU faculty. The GE Subcommittee therefore decided to focus its work this year on a proposal for implementing changes in GE and across the curriculum to enhance student writing.

**The overall goal of this effort is to enhance subject appropriate writing in all areas of the curriculum**

In order to develop this proposal, the GE Subcommittee:

1. reviewed writing programs across the CSU system and in other universities;
2. spoke with faculty teaching at the HSU writing center (David Stacey and Tracy Duckart);
3. met with faculty members teaching in Area A;
4. reviewed materials on writing across the curriculum (there is a large literature out there) with assistance from Peggy Kass, graduate student in English who is writing a thesis on the topic;
5. has communicated with Perry Philips, another graduate student in English, who is carrying out a survey of writing at HSU and who will provide the UCC with his data as a baseline assessing current levels of writing;
6. developed learning outcomes for student writing;
7. brought in Dr. Carol Holder a consultant on writing across the curriculum (WAC) who has run the WAC program at Cal Poly Pomona for many years and has advised many other CSUs on writing programs. During her visit, Carol Holder led a workshop on WAC for interested faculty and administrators; met with the GE Subcommittee and with the Provost;
8. met with interested faculty and staff to discuss this proposal at an open forum. The forum was poorly attended but those attending made useful comments.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR STUDENT WRITING**

On graduating, students should be able to:

1. Write clearly and with confidence about general subjects for a general audience.
2. Succinctly articulate a complex position and evaluate the adequacy of others' arguments.
3. Write clearly and with confidence on subjects specific to their major for a general audience.
4. Introduce and analyze a topic relevant to their major using discipline specific language for a peer audience in the discipline.

**AREA A - BASIC SUBJECTS / FOUNDATION SKILLS**

**1. Encourage more writing in Area A courses**

Reasoning: Additional courses in Area A that reinforce basic composition by giving students significant additional writing experience would provide a more solid foundation for writing in GE and in the majors

Precedents in the CSU (two writing courses in basic subjects):

Implementation: Encourage departments teaching Area A courses to integrate more writing in their courses; provide faculty development workshops and encourage Area A faculty to participate

**2. Include Math as an AREA A SUBJECT**

Reasoning: Math is a basic skill

- 3. Require all Students to complete Area A requirements by the end of their sophomore year** (The UCC has already forwarded this request to the Senate. The policy is currently under review by the Senate's Ed. Policy Committee).

Reasoning: We need to do more to provide students with foundation skills (written and oral communication, critical thinking and math) early in their university education. Currently, there are seniors enrolled in Area A courses.

Precedents in CSUs and other Universities include:

Bakersfield, San Diego State, SF State, San Luis Obispo

Implementation: Students cannot enroll in Upper Division GE before Area A is complete; or Departments require Area A completion as pre-requisite for majors courses. Provide resources for an adequate number of sections in Area A courses.

## **WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM**

### **LOWER DIVISION GE**

**Encourage faculty in all lower division GE courses to incorporate more writing into their teaching.**

Reasoning: Students will become better writers through practice. Learning through writing in Lower Division GE courses can reinforce basic composition courses taken in Area A.

Implementation: Encourage participation in faculty development activities

### **UPPER DIVISION GE**

#### **1. The challenge:**

- Continue to enhance general writing skills at the upper division level;
- Ensure that the transfer students (40% of HSU student body) are well prepared for writing in the majors
- Provide writing support for any students who fail the GWPE
- Avoid, if possible, adding more unit requirements to GE

Precedents for UDGE writing requirement include: Bakersfield, San Bernadino, San Diego, San Jose, San Luis Obispo, Stanislaus

Implementation: All University Writing Committee work in cooperation with the UCC GE subcommittee toward a solution that addresses these needs; define an assessment process for the solution; provide faculty development

### **UPPER DIVISION MAJORS**

#### **1. Encourage discussions in the departments on goals for writing in their majors**

Reasoning: Students should be familiar with the discourse and writing conventions in their respective disciplines, and know how to access the literature and pertinent information in their field of study.

Precedents include: Chico, Penn State, San Diego State, U. Missouri

Implementation: encouragement to departments, program review, faculty development

## **ASSESSMENT**

#### **1. The Graduate Writing Proficiency Exam (GWPE) must be taken by the end of junior year.**

UCC has recommended enforcement of this policy to the Senate. The Educational Policies committee is reviewing this.

Reasoning: Many students delay taking the GWPE until senior year when there is little opportunity to provide remedial assistance to those who fail. Students who fail the GWPE in junior year could be directed to the Writing Center for additional assistance.

Precedents include: Bakersfield, Sacramento, San Bernadino, San Diego State, SF State, San Jose, Stanislaus

**2. Assessment of the effectiveness of the Writing Across the Curriculum effort.**

Implementation: All University Writing Committee

**UNIVERSITY SUPPORT REQUIRED FOR ENHANCING WRITING**

**1. Faculty Development Support:** One or two HSU faculty members would receive release time (3 WTUs /semester) to be "Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) staff " to coordinate an ongoing faculty writing program. All new faculty and some existing faculty (about 20-30 people each year) would be invited to sign on for a 2 day workshop just before the fall semester. The workshop could bring in a different WAC expert every year and would focus on topics such as planning writing assignments that work, using in-class writing to reinforce learning, evaluating assignments in ways that maximize benefits to students while reducing faculty time spent grading them and other writing issues - just at the time when faculty are designing their syllabi and are most likely to have some time to think about these issues. Each participant would leave the workshop with at least one redesigned assignment for a class and lots of ideas about how to use more writing in the classroom. The WAC staff would then follow up with each participant later in the semester to see how things are working, to provide additional advice as needed, and to be available for consultation on writing related issues (e.g. models of writing intensive assignments, quick editing and evaluation methods, and diagnostics and referrals to the Writing Center).

Reasoning: After several years, the proportion of faculty who are using new approaches to teaching with writing will begin to become significant. This seems a constructive, long term and inexpensive way to begin to enhance student writing across the curriculum here at HSU that avoids a top down decree that there "shall be more writing assigned in x number of classes" or adding additional GE unit requirements.

Precedents include: WINGED program at San Luis Obispo; Cal Poly Pomona

**2. Distribute to all new faculty and make available to existing faculty an interdisciplinary writing guidebook** such as "Improving Student Writing – a guidebook for faculty in all disciplines" by Andrew Moss and Carol Holder. 1988. Kendall/Hunt Publishers.

**3. Writing Center.** Continue current support. In the longer term seek a Director/Faculty position with expertise in Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC). The center would be expanded, centrally located and be a place for all students to get help with writing, including upper division students who would ask for help with discourse and writing conventions specific to their respective disciplines. The Writing Center would provide support for faculty seeking to build more writing into their teaching.

**1. Form an All University Writing Committee.** The committee would advocate for writing across the curriculum (with a broader mandate than the GE Subcommittee), and among other charges, would promote faculty development activities and be responsible for assessment of writing program success.

**The GE Subcommittee recommends that implementation of this proposal begin Summer 2004 with an initial two day faculty development workshop in August before the fall semester begins.**